

**NOTICE: This is NOT the official version of the Committee Report as APPROVED by the Board of Aldermen. While reasonable efforts have been made to assure that this is the Committee Report that was presented at a meeting of the Board of Aldermen, you should check the Minutes of that meeting in order to confirm its approval, rejection or amendment. Do not rely on the accuracy of this information without first checking with the City Clerk.**

May 3, 2007

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE**  
**ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on May 3, 2007, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Member Alderman Walter Pero also present and voting. Also present were Alderman Bruce Desmond, Michael Lambert from the Mayor's Office, Health Director Noreen Burke, Tammy Roche from Somerville Cares About Prevention (SCAP), Stephanie Almedia from mayor's Opiate Prevention Task Force, City Solicitor John Gannon, ISD Director George Landers, Denise McWilliams from the Aids Action Committee and Attorney Richard DiGirolamo.

Ms. Burke told the members that the mayor's Opiate Prevention Task Force has been doing research on issues involving the disposal of needles and syringes and Ms. Almedia gave a presentation highlighting the following areas:

- Task Force's strategies
- MA Syringe Access law
- MA state laws regarding needle collection and disposal by local agencies
- MA state law local SHARPS disposal definitions
- MA state law SHARPS collection center definitions
- Current needle disposal plan (from the Somerville Health Department's website)
- Current DPH regulations, and
- Proposed options by SCAP
- 3 billion needles are disposed of yearly in the trash, 2 billion of these are from approved medical uses
- the DPH wants to implement a pilot program for collections in Somerville

At the present time, CVS, Brooks Pharmacy and Walgreens do not take needles back.

Chairman White offered that there are 2 groups of needle users, legitimate and illegal drug users, and that their reactions to a collection program might be vastly different. Because it is now legal to purchase syringes, the cost has dropped from an illegal street cost of about \$20 to 39 cents. Chairman White asked about the likelihood of drug users utilizing a collection program and asked if there was any information as to how many users are taking advantage of such programs. Ms. Almedia told the members that some drug

users have told her that they would use collection centers, if available, but many users don't even know about them. She stressed that a media campaign is needed to get the word out.

Ms. McWilliams told the members that her agency procured sharps containers, capable of holding 100 needles, that fit in a person's back pocket. She conceded that this wouldn't solve the whole problem, but it could help to make a dent. The DPH has not done any follow-up, so there is no data available. Massachusetts is far behind the rest of the country in instituting collection programs. Needle exchange sites are reporting a decrease in activity, indicating a rise in illegal drug use. Ms. McWilliams also said that fire departments without EMT's are more reluctant to participate in collection programs.

Ms. Burke said that the issue is gathering momentum at the state level and she hopes to have a short term program in place in approximately 3 months, but stated that time is needed to set it up properly.

### **183265**

Mr. Landers told the members that he walked the Alhyde site with Deputy Fire Chief Bill Hallinan and the contractor who will demolish the building. Funding for the demolition is not yet in place, therefore, Inspectional Services and the Fire Department decided to give the owner 90 days to demolish the building. The building's roof and basement are to be made safe, or inaccessible, by Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. The owner has been notified, per state law, and his representative told Mr. Landers that they would do whatever the city wants.

Alderman O'Donovan, speaking as a private citizen, said that the problems at the building have been known for 3 years and stated that if the Fire Department has the ability to order that the building be taken down, it should have been taken already.

Alderman Pero asked Mr. Landers for assurance that an agreement had been reached and that the promised acts would be completed. (See attached letter, submitted May 4, 2007)

Attorney Richard DiGirolamo told the members that he couldn't agree to the timetable because he is not confident that the project, as proposed, would have the final approvals within 90 days. His client understands that he can't own a building that is unsafe and he will do whatever is necessary to make it safe. Attorney DiGirolamo noted that the site is contaminated and, as such, it is best handled during a demolishing program. Additionally, if the development is approved, then the bike path can be used during demolition, and if not, or if the building is taken down with 90 days, the bike path cannot be used during demolition.

Solicitor Gannon told the members that this situation falls under the danger to life and limb standard and that he is prepared to go to Superior Court to enforce the order to make it safe.

Mr. Landers doesn't think that the city can order the building to be taken down if the roof is made safe, the sprinkler system is fixed and the cellar blocked. dressed as well.

Alderman Desmond's resolution *that the owner of the property at 56 Clyde Street provide a security detail, private or public, at the location until the zoning is decided and that this resolution does not limit any remedy open to the City Solicitor to seek any and all remedies deemed appropriate by the Fire Department and Inspection Services and approved by the court* was approved.

**182793**

Alderman Desmond provided an update resulting from this matter recently being discussed in the Licenses and Permits Committee. Solicitor Gannon stated that the city has the right to send a notice to the management company to cure any defects and if the defects are not cured within 60 days, the city can make the repairs and bill the management company.

No papers were acted on.

---

Alderman William White, Chairman  
Committee on Public Health and Public Safety

## **COMMITTEE REPORT**

Report of the Committee on Public Health and  
Public Safety, May 3, 2007

In Board of Aldermen

---

---

---

---

---

Clerk